

PHI 230: American Philosophy



Prof. Kelly Parker

Fall 2007

Section 1: Tue and Thur 11:30-12:45 pm

Contact

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Office Hours: Tue & Thu 10-11 am, Wed 1:30-2:30 pm, or by arrangement

Orientation

North America has a distinctive culture, and it has produced an original philosophical outlook. This outlook found its strongest historical expression in the movement known as American Pragmatism. PHI 230 introduces this philosophical approach through an examination of its origins in European thought, and of the overall development of American philosophy from the Colonial period onward into the twentieth century.

Texts

Required

Hollinger, D. and C. Capper, eds. *The American Intellectual Tradition*. Vol. 1. Fifth edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Miller, Perry. *Errand into the Wilderness*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1956.

Stuhr, John J., ed. *Pragmatism and Classical American Philosophy*. Second Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Recommended

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. Sixth edition. Modern Language Association of America, 2003.

Rosenthal, S., C. Hausman, and D. Anderson, eds. *Classical American Pragmatism: Its Contemporary Vitality*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1999.

Other materials will be made available in class or placed on reserve.

Assignments and Grading

- **Short Essay** on Assigned Topic (20%). 4-5 pages.
- **First exam** (20%). Essay format, from study guide.
- **Research Paper** (35%). 10-12 pages on a topic of your choice, developed in consultation with the instructor.
- **Final Exam** (25%). Essay format, from study guide.

Attendance

The success of this class depends largely on in-class discussion. I expect you to be here on time, and to come prepared to discuss the assigned readings. I do not distinguish between "excused" and "unexcused" absences. The equivalent of one week's absences will be tolerated without penalty. Each absence beyond that is the basis for a penalty, to be deducted from your final grade.

2 class periods missed - no penalty

3-4 class periods missed - 3% deduction from semester grade for each class

More than 4 classes – May merit summary grade of No Credit (F)

Disability Support Services

If there is any student in this class who has special needs because of learning, physical or other disability, please contact me and Disability Support Services (DSS) at 616.331.2490. Furthermore, if you have a disability and think you will need assistance evacuating this classroom and/or building in an emergency situation, please make me aware so I can develop a plan to assist you.

Grade Definitions

[A] Outstanding. Work displays thorough mastery of material, exceptionally good writing, and genuine engagement with the subject-matter. This grade is reserved for those students who attain the highest levels of excellence in thought and scholarship.

[B] Good. Work displays accurate understanding of the material, writing is clear and free of mechanical errors.

[C] Fair. Work displays basic grasp of material, though there may be the occasional misunderstanding or inaccuracy. Writing quality acceptable.

[D] Marginal. Work displays a grasp of the material adequate for credit, but quality of work indicates lack of effort or aptitude.

[F] Unacceptable. Excessive absences, assignments not completed, or assignments unworthy of credit. Cheating or plagiarism will earn an automatic F for the assignment and/or the course.

Papers

I expect papers to be proofread, typed in dark print, double-spaced, with numbered pages. Cover sheets and external binders are unnecessary and wasteful. Please don't use them. Include your name, the course number and section, date, and the assignment name or title on the first page. A paper encumbered by excessive spelling, grammatical, punctuation, and/or documentation errors will not receive a grade higher than "D" regardless of whatever other merits the paper may have.

It is best to hand papers to me in class. If this is not possible, leave them in my mailbox in 210 Lake Superior Hall. It is a good policy to keep a photocopy of any paper you turn in. Papers turned in after the announced deadline will not be graded except when the paper is late due to genuine emergency.

Special Note on Proper Citation of Sources and Plagiarism

"Offering the work of someone else as one's own is plagiarism" (*GVSU Student Code*, Sec 223.01). There is such a thing as unintentional plagiarism. It results from ignorance of proper citation practices, but is nonetheless a violation of academic standards and will not be tolerated.

In general, any use of words or ideas that one obtains from a specific source requires a citation of that source. Citations may take the form of footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical references. Whatever its form, a citation identifies the author, title, and other bibliographic information for the work, and identifies the pages on which the information appears.

All citations and lists of works consulted should follow the guidelines in *The MLA Handbook*, which is available in the bookstore and at good libraries everywhere.

Structure

I. Introduction (1 wk)

Course orientation; The tradition of philosophy; Overview of American philosophy

- Handout on the history of philosophy in America

II. Colonial Philosophy and the Massachusetts Bay Experience (3½ wks)

Puritanism; European ideology and New World experience

- Winthrop & Miller ch. 1; Mather & Miller ch. 5; Hutchinson & Miller ch. 3; Edwards & Miller ch. 6

III. The Enlightenment in America (2 wks)

Liberal democracy and the rights of man; The situation of women and slaves

- Franklin & Adams; Paine & Jefferson "Declaration"; Madison "Federalist" #10 & #51; Douglass & Fuller

IV. Transcendentalism and the Romantic Movement (2½ wks)

German idealism in American hands; Establishing a national literature

- Fuller, Emerson, & Whitman; Melville & Hawthorne; Thoreau

V. Entry to the Twentieth Century: Pragmatism and Radical Empiricism (4 wks)

Classical American philosophy as a new alternative.

- Peirce, James, Royce, Locke, Whitehead, Langer, Dewey

VI. Wrapup. (1 wk)

Topic and material for final week to be determined by class members' interest.

Important Dates			
Drop (100% Tuition Refund)	Aug. 31, 5pm	Short Essay Due	Sept. 27
Labor Day Recess	Sept. 2-4	First Exam	Oct. 30
Drop (75% Tuition Refund)	Sept. 21, 5pm	Research Conferences	Oct. 29-Nov. 2
Withdrawal Deadline	Oct. 19, 5 pm	Research Paper Due	Nov. 27
Thanksgiving Recess	Nov. 21-25	Final Exam	Dec. 12, 12:00-1:50pm